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RECENT DISCOVERIES IN EGYPT.

BY

MISS AMELIA B. EDWARDS.

The paper which I had the honor of reading before the American Geographical Society on December 9, 1889, and of which I am requested to write a *résumé* for the Transactions of the Society, dealt principally with the very remarkable results obtained by Mr. W. M. Flinders Petrie in the course of his recent explorations in Upper Egypt. These results tend to show that there were colonies of European foreigners settled in Egypt at a much earlier period than has hitherto been supposed. They also prove the existence of alphabetic signs (and presumably of a system of writing) peculiar to those foreign settlers, and for the most part entirely distinct from the hieroglyphic signs by means of which the people of Ancient Egypt had, from immemorial time, recorded the deeds of their kings and the dogmas of their religion.

It is now more than a year and a half ago—in the spring, namely, of the year 1889—that Mr. Petrie, having completed his excavations at Hawâra, proceeded to explore the ruins of two small towns situate, like Hawâra, on the edge of the desert bordering the eastward limit of the Fayûm. The one mound is locally known as Tell Gurob, or “The Mound of the Raven ;” the other was so little known or noticed by the natives, that only one old man remembered to have heard it

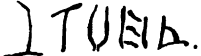
called Tell Kahûn, when he was a boy. Tell Gurob and Tell Kahûn lie about seven miles apart, on either side of the Bahr Jusûf Canal ; and Mr. Petrie took advantage of their proximity to open both at the same time.

Even before beginning the work of excavation, Mr. Petrie recognized that the ancient towns represented by these two formless heaps of crude brick and desert sand were each of a single period : *i. e.*, that having been built, and for a time inhabited, they had been suffered to fall to ruin, without any pulling down and rebuilding, such as takes place in towns inhabited by successive generations. Each site was therefore a mere surface ruin ; and, there being no accumulation of *débris*, the labor was comparatively light. The earlier site proved to belong to the remote period of the XIIth Egyptian Dynasty ; the later site to the latter half of the XVIIIth Dynasty and the first half of the XIXth. Or, to be more exact, Kahûn was found to be the town built for the accommodation of the workmen and officials employed in building the pyramid of Usertesén II., fourth Pharaoh of the XIIth Dynasty (*circa* B. C. 2800) ; this being the pyramid known as the Pyramid of Illahûn.* The workmen probably migrated when the pyramid and funerary chapel were completed ; but the town continued to be inhabited for two or three generations by a mixed population, and was deserted about the end of the XIIth Dynasty, or the beginning of the XIIIth.

Tell Gurob, on the other hand, was founded during the reign of Thothmes III. (*circa* B. C. 1400),

* This pyramid was at the same time explored by Mr. Petrie, who found it to be that of Usertesén II. There is an evident connection between the names Illahûn and Kahûn, both of which may possibly echo some very ancient name.









sixth sovereign of the XVIIIth Dynasty, and became extinct about a century later, in the time of Seti II. of the XIXth Dynasty (*circa* B. C. 1290).*

Kahûn, the workmens' colony, was laid out in parallel rows of narrow streets inclosed in a rectangular boundary-wall, and it appears to have somewhat resembled the Escorial as to plan. In the ruins of the houses, a vast number of domestic objects were found, as well as old tools left behind as useless, when the town was deserted. Among these were knives, chisels, nails, mallets, adze-blades and an adze-handle, in the house of a carpenter; two or three plasterers' floats in the house of a plasterer; a wooden brick-mould and a trowel in the house of a bricklayer; a mason's plummet; a laborer's sickle and hoe, etc., etc. As in all ancient Egyptian sites, there was, of course, a great accumulation of pottery broken and unbroken, some of the larger pieces of ware being incised with a rude imitation of basket-work, extremely archaic in style, and unlike any decorative motives known in Egyptian art. The shapes of the various vessels also differed from the shapes fashioned by Egyptian potters. Some of these pots, moreover, and a large proportion of the potsherds, were found to be inscribed with alphabetic characters scratched on the surface of the ware. These were apparently owner's marks, and therefore disconnected; but on one piece of curiously shaped wood, which formed probably part of the handle of a tool, was cut a word of five letters, evidently a name .


* These dates are calculated according to the chronology of Manetho, as adopted by Mariette. Mr. Petrie makes them about two centuries lower.

In this group of letters, and among the letters scratched upon the pottery and potsherds, it is a very remarkable fact that some look like modified hieroglyphs, while others are identical with certain characters of the kind known as "Cadmæan"—the earliest Greek derivative of the Phœnician.

Others closely resemble various letters of the Cypriote, Græco-Asiatic, and early Italic alphabets.

In the group of which a fac-simile is given above, we have for instance in the first letter the Etruscan ; in the second, the Theran ; in the third, a character rudely resembling the Etruscan  or ; and in the fourth, a form nearly identical with the Phœnician  or . The fifth sign,  may perhaps stand for the Egyptian hieroglyph . The word spelled by these five characters is not yet satisfactorily deciphered.

Others of the signs scratched on the potsherds of Kahûn are unquestionably Cypriote, as in the following examples :

Kahûn.	Cypriote.
	
	
	
	
	
	

These are but six instances out of nearly forty parallisms between the Kahûn and Cypriote signs.

The former are between seventy and eighty in all. Some are quite unknown; about a dozen are distinctly Egyptian; and the rest more or less resemble the alpha-

betic signs of Thera, Santorin, and Etruria. Of the "zvastika" so frequently found by Dr. Schliemann at Troy and Mycenæ, two examples are included.*

When we remember that the town in which these inscribed potsherds have been discovered was built during the reign of Usertesen II. (and doubtless at the beginning of his reign, it being customary for a Pharaoh to commence the preparation of his tomb as soon as he ascended the throne), and that the place ceased to be inhabited, if not immediately after the completion of the pyramid, quite certainly by the time when the houses fell out of repair, the remote date to which the foregoing alphabetic signs must be attributed becomes of profound significance.

At Tell Gurob, a block sculptured with the ovals of Thothmes III. gave the earliest local date, while other objects inscribed with the names and titles of Tutankhamen, Horemheb, Rameses I., Seti I., Rameses II. and Menepthah show that the place continued to be inhabited till past the middle of the XIXth Dynasty. Here again, the houses had been left standing on the desert sand as at first erected, the upper parts of the walls having fallen in, and no attempt having been made at rebuilding. As at Kahûn, these ruined shells had become choked with rubbish, buried under the blown sand, and thus sheltered from observation and plunder. Neither site can, in fact, be accurately described as a "mound;" both being mere low-lying sand-heaps, such as might have accumulated over a natural rising ground at the edge of the desert.

* Cf: The Alphabetic Tables of Thera, Phrygia, Lycia, Etruria, etc., in Maspéro's *Hist. Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient*; also the alphabetic tables in Isaac Taylor's "*History of the Alphabet*."

A large number of domestic objects were found in the ruins of private houses at Gurob, such as combs, netting needles, children's toys, scribes' palettes, toilet vases, spindles, whorls, baskets, balls of thread, etc., etc., as well as some very fine bronze knives, chisels, axe-heads, mirrors and the like. There was also an abundance of pottery, variously shaped and decorated, and the usual heaps of miscellaneous potsherds. Here again, a large proportion of the potsherds was found to be incised with alphabetic characters. The pottery of Tell Gurob is, however, quite unlike the pottery of Kahûn, both in style and workmanship; also, the alphabetic signs scratched on the Gurob fragments are less archaic, and much more easily identified, than the alphabetic signs of Kahûn. The pottery of Gurob is partly Cypriote and partly Mycenæan in type. False-necked vases, bottles of the well-known "pilgrim" shape, and vessels decorated with concentric patterns abound; all alike foreign to the hand of the native Egyptian potter. The alphabetic forms have passed the transitional stage of the Kahûn signs. They no longer bear a doubtful resemblance to hieroglyphic characters, or to "Cadmæan" Greek. They are distinctly Cypriote, with a sprinkling of letters identical with the alphabetic forms of Thera, Melos, Lycia, Phrygia and Etruria. Of Cypriote characters, Professor Sayce has verified 51, while of Egyptian hieroglyphs, there are 6 or 8 only.

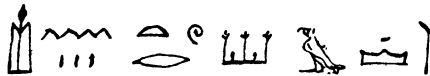
The epigraphic evidence thus far goes to prove the presence of two colonies of alien settlers on the border of the Fayûm, very near together as regards locality, but widely separate as regards date. The evidence, however, is not only epigraphic. In the cemetery of the


ancient town represented by the ruins of Gurob have been found interments of a foreign race; the bodies mummified "after the manner of the Egyptians," but with foreign names painted upon their mummy-cases, and skulls of an alien type. That they were a yellow-haired people is shown by the yellow and reddish locks yet thick upon certain of the mummied scalps. The interments are such as would be made for persons of good social position—not for captives or slaves. The coffins are painted black, with white inscriptions; and Cypriote pottery was found buried with the dead. The white ants have, unfortunately, done much damage to the mummy-cases, and but few of the inscriptions are legible. In one tomb, however, were found ten Cypriote jars and several Ushabti made for a man called



Kash-sadi-amia; a name distinctly Asiatic.*

Yet more remarkable is the name found upon the coffin of one of the yellow-haired mummies, called



An-Tursha, or *Aniu-Tursha*, of whom it is stated in his funerary inscription, that he was governor of the palace. It is to be observed that the above name is followed by the two determinative signs  indicating a foreign country; while the name of the deceased clearly denotes that he was of the race of the "Tursha"—a nation† which first appears upon the mon-

*"Sadi" is found in Hittite names, and it is therefore probable that *Kash-sadi-amia* was of Hittite (Khetan) descent

† See for the identity of the "Tursha" with the Tyrseni and Etruscans, "*Les Origines de l'Histoire d'après la Bible*" by F. Lenormant, Chap. xiii. pp: 132 et

uments of Egypt in the beginning of the reign of Ramesses II., and which reappears in the fifth year of Menepthah, his successor. The "Tursha" have been identified by De Rougé and Maspéro with the Tyrsēni, or Etruscans; an identification confirmed by the late François Lenormant. That an Etruscan should have filled so important an office as that of Governor of the Palace, is very remarkable; this fact accounts, however, for the presence of Etruscan settlers in the town, as such settlers would naturally congregate under the protection of so powerful a compatriot.

Yet further evidence of foreign occupation has been discovered by Mr. Petrie at both Kahûn and Gurob, in the presence of weights differing in all respects from the weights current in ancient Egypt. Eight of these weights (all of foreign standards, or multiples of foreign standards) were found in Kahûn. One important example weighs 30 x 399 grains, which is double the 200 grain weight, less one grain only. That is to say, it is based on a multiple of 30, which is the Æginetan standard; whereas, if based on the Egyptian standard, it would be a multiple of 20 or 50. The weight is marked "thirty" in Egyptian numerals *ⲙ ⲙ ⲙ*. The earliest example of weight of the Æginetan standard previously found in Egypt was of the time of the XVIIIth Dynasty; whereas this of Kahûn is of the XIIth Dynasty.

Thirteen foreign weights were found at Tell Gurob, all based on the Assyrian shekel standard. Some of these were of hematite, and one was of lead. Only one Egyptian weight was found at Gurob, and not even one at Kahûn.

seq. 2d Edition. Also, E. de Rougé in "*Les Attaques dirigées contre L'Egypte*," *Revue Archéologique*: Vol. xvi., new series.

These facts are conclusive. They prove that both sites were, at widely separate periods, occupied by foreigners, and that these strangers adhered to their national standards of metrology. It is remarkable that the Æginetan standard should prevail in the earlier settlement, and the Assyrian standard in the later; more especially as the later settlement was largely inhabited by an Etruscan colony, who might be expected to follow the Æginetan system. It was, however, in Gurob that the Asiatic named *Kash-sadi-amia* lived and died; we may therefore conclude that there was also an Asiatic (possibly a Hittite) element in the community, and that the Assyrian shekel-standard was established by Asiatic settlers.

Our knowledge of the Greeks from historical Greek sources may be said to begin with the First Olympiad. It is at this point that tradition is succeeded by history. But our knowledge of the Greeks from sources external to Hellas dates from an infinitely earlier period, and it comes to us from Egypt. In a tablet carved on the cliffs of the valley of Hammamat, which leads from Coptos to the Red Sea, there exists to this day a record of the victories of Sankhara, last king of the XIth Dynasty (*circa* B. C. 2500) in which he boasts that he has "broken down the strength of the Hanebu;"—"Hanebu," (which means "the people of all shores") being the name by which the coast-folk and islanders of the Ægæan were designated, not only at that remote time, but as recently as the reigns of the Ptolemies.* The fact that this very ancient race-name continued in use up

* See *Les Origines de l'Histoire d'après la Bible* by F. Lenormant, Chap. xiii. p. 21, 2d Edition, 1884.

to a date comparatively modern (and this despite the distinctions made under the new empire between Danaeans and Achæans, Lycians and Carians, etc., etc.,) leaves us in no doubt as to its application. Earlier, therefore, by a century than the beginning of the reign of Usertesen II., in whose time Kahûn was built for the housing of the foreign workmen employed on the pyramid of Illahûn, we find an Egyptian king celebrating his triumph over the island tribes and coast tribes to which those workmen belonged. This is the earliest mention of the Greeks in the history of the world.

Turning next to the time of Thothmes III, we find it recorded in his famous "Chant of Victory"* that this Pharaoh had vanquished the people of "Kefa and Asi," and those "who dwelt in their islands"—i. e., the people of Phœnicia and Cyprus, and the islanders of the Archipelago. And it is precisely during the reign of Thothmes III. that the site of Gurob is occupied by foreign settlers, some of whom inscribe their pottery with Cypriote characters, while all employ the Assyrian standard of metrology.

Take them from what point of view we may, these coincidences are very remarkable. But first and foremost stands the extraordinary fact that from the ruins of two small and insignificant hamlets, which no previous traveller had observed and which not even the neighboring Arabs had thought worth plundering, Mr. Petrie has disinterred the earliest Greek alphabetic signs yet discovered. In the characters scratched upon the pot-

* See "The Tablet of Thothmes III." translated into English by Dr. Birch, *Records of the Past*, Vol. II; also the French version of Mariette in his Catalogue of the *Musée de Boulaq*; ditto, Maspéro, in his *Histoire des Peuples Anciennes d'Orient*, Chap. v., p. 202.

sherds of Kahûn, rude and tentative as they are, we seem not only to detect the very beginnings of that alphabet, but to see it in the course of its development from Egyptian hieroglyphs, and possibly (as Professor Maspero has suggested) from the masons' marks employed by Egyptian workmen. These inscribed potsherds are contemporary with a period which, according to a generally received opinion, coincides with the descent of Abraham into Egypt.

The inscribed potsherds of Gurob date from a reign computed at some twelve or thirteen hundred years later; and, even so, are more than two centuries earlier than the accepted date of the Exodus.*

When these dates are compared with the dates of the earliest specimens of Greek writing previously known—namely, the rock-cut inscriptions of Santorin and Thera, which Lenormant attributes to the 9th century, B. C., and the famous inscription cut upon the leg of one of the colossi at Abû Simbel, which is contemporary with the 47th Olympiad—the extraordinary importance of Mr. Petrie's discovery is thrown into startling relief. It carries back the history of the alphabet to a period variously computed at from 2,500 to 2,300 years before the Christian era; and it shows that the Iliad may, after all, have been committed to writing while Homer yet lived to dictate it.†

* The inscribed potsherds of Kahûn and Gurob are deposited in the Department of Greek antiquities in the British Museum, and are open to the inspection of all who desire to examine them.

† Since the above discourse was delivered before the American Geographical Society (on December 9, 1889), Mr. Petrie has published a full account of his discoveries, entitled "*Kahûn, Gurob and Hawâra*," to which I refer all who desire to become more fully acquainted with the subject.

A. B. E.